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CAESAR, B.G. 2.8

In October, 1912, Mr. C. R. Jeffords, of the Boys' High School, Brooklyn, wrote me as follows:

I was much interested in the review of T. R. Holmes, Caesar's conquest of Gaul², by Professor Dennison (THE CLASSICAL WEEKLY 6.30-31). I have never been able to understand how the words in Caesar, B. G. 2.8, *ab utroque latere eius collis transversam fossam obdixit*, can be interpreted to fit the map generally given to illustrate this part of Caesar's narrative. That map represents the trenches at *one* end of the hill. Aside from the wording of the description, it seems odd that these trenches should extend in front and in back of the *right* flank, as usually represented, instead of *in front of both left and right flanks*. If you have a copy of Holmes's book handy, I should be obliged for information as to how the new map on page 71 represents these trenches.

In some way this letter was mislaid, and did not come to light till lately. On looking up the map, and comparing (or, rather, contrasting) it with Caesar's words, I found myself sharing Mr. Jeffords's doubts. In one of the most recent editions of Caesar, that by Dr. A. L. Hodges (Macmillan, 1905), the map is given in connection with the text, on page 95, without comment. The single comment in the Notes on the map (pages 317-318), however, shows that Dr. Hodges was troubled by the map:

pro castris: the front of a camp should be the side towards the enemy. A glance at the plan shows that here no side exactly fronted the Belgian lines, but it seems pretty certain that Caesar meant by the front the part facing westward.

Turning now to Holmes, Caesar's Conquest of Gaul², one finds that, to face page 71, Mr. Holmes gave a plan labelled "Operations on the Aisne (According to Col. Stoffel)". But it is clear from page 73, and still more from pages 659-661, that Mr. Holmes did not accept this plan. In his annotated edition of the *De Bello Gallico* (Oxford, 1914)¹, Mr. Holmes gives the same map, to face page 73, but again, on pages 74-75, he makes it plain that he does not accept the plan. It is most unfortunate that he did not, in each of his books, indicate clearly, on the plan itself, that it was, in his judgment, incorrect, and not in accord with Caesar's words. Many will look at a map or a plan who have not time or patience to read through what is said about it.

I find myself in complete accord with Mr. Holmes's two excellent discussions of this battle, and the preparations Caesar made for it. When will students of the Classics learn that, to find the meaning of a passage, they must, to use a scientist's term, sterilize that passage, that is, they must first of all examine the *ipsissima verba* of the passage, without regard to what has been written about it? This Mr. Holmes has done. Whoever does it, will conclude, as Mr. Jeffords saw, that there was a trench on each flank of Caesar's army. If Colonel Stoffel's excavations do not agree with Caesar's description, it is plain that Colonel Stoffel was digging in the wrong place. Some one who has the ability to draw should give us a plan of this battle based on what Caesar actually says.

After writing the above, I looked at the note in Meusel's annotated edition of *De Bello Gallico* 1-4 (= Kraner-Dittenberger¹⁷. Weidmann, Berlin, 1913). He rejects Colonel Stoffel's view that the battle was fought near Berry-au-Bac (Mauchamp):

Hat die Schlacht wirklich dort stattgefunden, wofür ja allerdings manches spricht, so muss man mancherlei Ungenauigkeiten in Caesars Bericht annehmen.

In looking back at the sixteenth edition of this book, I found that as long ago as 1898 Dittenberger had taken issue squarely with Stoffel's conclusions, and had insisted that there was a trench at each side.

Sollten die Befestigungen, welche bei den Napoleonischen Ausgrabungen <conducted by Colonel Stoffel> aufgefunden worden sind . . . wirklich in ihrer jetzigen Gestalt von Caes. herrühren, so hätte C. infolge eines Gedächtnisfehlers dieselben unrichtig dargestellt.

A pleasant bit of sarcasm! The *Sollten* clause here one would turn into Latin by *si forte*. C. K.

THE PLEBS URBANA IN ROME¹

A Phase of Social Conditions in the Later Years of the Republic

The history of revolutionary movements in Rome is practically a chapter in the history of economic delusion and wrong-doing. The weaker members of society, however essential to its welfare, suffered the delusion,

¹Reviewed by Professor Lodge, in THE CLASSICAL WEEKLY 9. 37-39.

¹⁷This paper was read at the Tenth Annual Meeting of The Classical Association of the Atlantic States, held in the Central High School, Philadelphia, April 15, 1916.

and the stronger and more influential members of the same society were responsible for the wrong-doing. The significance of these social upheavals has in part been glossed over in the extant literature by prejudice, party interest and the fine phrases of rhetoric, and in part has not been understood, from lack of sufficient detailed information. Still, Roman society was not so complex as ours and a fairly accurate analysis of some of the economic forces can be made. These forces are, of course, quite apart from the political system, though constantly modified by it.

Some have supposed—Ihering², for instance—that Roman social equality was a concomitant of real liberty, the liberty which gives every individual equality of opportunity; that the inequality of the result was due to natural inequalities in ability, industry, genius, or the circumstances of public service, and had nothing injurious in it; and that, therefore, the inequality of rank, honor, political influence, and material prosperity gave no ground for opposition to the Republic as a form of government.

This view, however, is a flat contradiction of the fact, although it might well appear as argument in the public orations of Cicero. The economic result may have been natural enough, but it was just the system of wealth concentration, aided in part by insane agrarian legislation, that weakened the Roman social structure and ruined it. Nowhere were the rich enabled to become millionaires, and the poor, beggars with greater ease than at Rome. And this took place in spite of the civic equality between the plebeians and the patricians, which was a political relation and only indirectly related to the economic decay of Rome. In fact, the significant change in Rome was the one which transformed, by degrees, the old rural Republic into a metropolis of wealth that changed the *de jure* political equality into a *de facto* social inferiority, that made the old *plebs rustica* a *plebs urbana*. In this purely economic transformation are to be found the causes of social discontent, for the *plebs urbana* had nothing in common with the old *plebs rustica* except the title of *civis Romanus*. It was a proletariat body whose growing wretchedness and restlessness became a potent influence in political life as it rose from a contemplation of its own distresses to a self consciousness of its power. It caused the Roman world to tremble, to weaken, and ultimately to fall. The old *plebs rustica* was an element of social strength, and its individuals were a class of contented Roman citizens, with little predilection for political quarrels. It was only a natural resentment to the usurpation of rights that made them enter the fight for equality before the law, and not any discontent with their lot in life. But after the abolition of the patriciate and the formal establishment of civic equality, a new aristocracy arose and the status of the former class gradually changed and so did its disposition. This development was drowned in the noise of

wars and victories, but the foundation of revolution was laid. Rome became gradually a cosmopolis in which the old Roman rural Republic received other elements. To quote Cicero, it was a state made up of the gathering of nationalities, *civitas ex nationum conventu constituta*, and these elements were not always such as added economic stability. Naturally, thus, the old Roman type lost its distinctiveness.

Dionysius of Halicarnassus (7.66.4) would have us believe that, just as in respectable families the members settle their disputes with one another in an amicable way, so political parties at Rome had similar relations; that there was a feeling of equality, economically and politically. This can not be true for all periods. There was, indeed, a time, the happy period between the adjustment of the plebeian-patrician struggle for civil equality and the Hannibalic Wars, when the reciprocal relations of the social orders were in the main peaceful. If this feeling of equality was genuine at this time, it was because of the real equal weight of influence possessed by the man of small, moderate means, and the man of large wealth. What we are told regarding the economic position of a Curius Dentatus (consul 290) or Atilius Regulus may be in part problematical, but this much is certainly true, that the ruling classes were not separated by an impassable gulf from the middle and the lower classes. The nobility counted among their number men who could regard the simple agricultural landowner as their equal. 'When our ancestors', writes Cato (*De Agri Cultura* 1.1), 'wished to praise a man of honor, they called him a true agriculturist'. This point of view strengthened the relations of mutual confidence that bound together the farmer class and the senatorial families. The former looked to the latter for advice in legal matters and for the leaders who were to guide the agriculturist legions to victory, renown and material gain. And herein the economic interests of the *plebs rustica* were served as a power in the State and its prosperity maintained, for it rendered, in each new war, the acquisition of new territory possible.

The members of the agricultural class, while their normal development was untrammelled, had nothing further from their hearts than to reach out beyond their position and calling, so long as they remained a large and independent social class with an acknowledged powerful influence on public life. They were filled with a proud self consciousness of their importance, a feeling very far from that social pessimism that is ashamed of its calling and is consumed with jealousy and enmity toward those holding higher social position. In the main the *plebs rustica* was the conservative element in the State as long as the social economy enabled it to labor and enjoy the fruits of labor.

But we are not justified in assuming that the thoughts and sensations of a man of this class were those of his idle proletarian successor, simply because both were Romans. His type changed when the conditions of his environment did, and when he makes appeal to the revolutionary power we see little left of the sound sense,

²Geist des Römischen Rechts, II.1.88 ff.

contented spirit and quiet dignity of earlier days. The main danger that threatened him was the capitalist class that developed side by side with him, and a true social instinct awakened in him the realization that this new power was outgrowing his own influence and endangering his prosperity. But it was an economic condition he could not combat with the same ease as his political evils. In fact, in the battle against the capitalists, the agriculturist showed himself an illusionist, bereft of sound sense of what was right and possible, and grasping at all sorts of devices whose efficacy in accomplishing economic reform were, *a priori*, small. And so the continued rise of the money power in the State ultimately produced that social economy which swept this whole class and many others along with it to ruin.

The rise of the capitalist class in Rome was rapid. Attention need only be called to a few sources of its strength and growth. Not the least of these was money-lending, for no branch of commercial industry was more zealously prosecuted by the Romans than the trade of the professional money-lender. The State itself took the lead in promoting the development of a money power by letting many of its more complicated revenues and its contracts for supplies to capitalists for a fixed sum. The opportunities for 'graft', as we call it, in such a system need only be suggested, without introduction of the plentiful evidence we possess on this point, to show how fortunes were easily and rapidly accumulated. Again, the leasing or the purchase by capitalists of large landed estates in and out of Italy to carry on the cultivation of grain and the rearing of cattle on a large scale offered equal opportunities for speculation. Naturally such pursuits were engaged in for revenue only and not as a means of livelihood only, as was the case with the small landholder. In time the acquisition of wealth became an element of public and private morality, and the mercantile spirit led to a third phase of money enterprise, the formation of corporations dealing not only with public contracts and agriculture but with commerce in every line. From the magnitude of these transactions it became at times impossible to take these contracts individually, and at times inadvisable. Cato, for example, advised the capitalists of his day not to fit out but one ship with his money, but to join with 49 others and send out 50 ships, and take a fiftieth interest in each. All this laid the foundation for that endurance of Roman wealth which was no less remarkable than its magnitude.

The consequence of the one-sided power of capital was the disproportionate prominence given to those branches of business least productive in any national economy. Politically, the moneyed interests served to draw more and more distinctly the line of social distinction between rich and poor, and dealt another blow at that civic equality which had already received a fatal wound in the rise of the ruling order of lords soon after the downfall of the patriciate. Above all, the deep-rooted immorality which is inherent in an economy of

pure capital struck at the very heart of society and substituted absolute selfishness for humanity, rank injustice for the 'square deal'.

Intimately connected with the growth of the money power was the gradual growth of a dependent class in Rome. In part, this class resulted directly from the capitalistic system; in part, it simply accompanied it as an independent factor. Numerous elements of the population made up the class, some with political status and others with none, some Romans and others aliens, a composite crowd whose political influence became in time a source of alarm for the governing classes and an insidious evil influence in the well-being of Rome. Not all these influences had the same effect upon society. The most important class was, perhaps, that of the clients. From time immemorial the Roman of quality exercised a sort of control over this class of freedmen and was consulted by them in all matters of purely personal concern. As the aristocracy became a special ruling class, concentrating in its hands not only power but wealth, the clients became in turn parasites and beggars. In time this sort of clientship was increased and welcomed, and was worked, financially and politically, for the advantage of the class that supported it. At first the class was too respectable to admit of direct corruption, though this would have been less a source of evil than the indirect methods which were later employed. The old obligation of the magistrates to see that grain could be purchased at reasonable prices was one of these indirect influences which ultimately, under the early Empire, led to the cry of 'bread for nothing and games forever'. 'No wonder', Cato says, 'the citizens no longer listen to good advice. The belly has no ears'. Festivals became more numerous and when once established could not be discontinued. True, the cost of the festivals was defrayed by the magistrates from their personal fortunes, and those who sanctioned them thought they were not a drain upon the public purse. It would have been less injurious to allow a useless expense to burden the public budget than to allow the furnishing of amusement and grain—or, what was the same thing—wealth, to become the qualification for holding office. The vested interests of capital also introduced another important factor into the Roman economy, the slaves. The companies that farmed the various public revenues, every one who took contracts for buildings, or provided games, the merchants whose argosies were on every sea, the owners of large estates who were interested in the cultivation of grain and the rearing of cattle all employed slaves to reduce the first cost and insure a larger return on their investment. It required capital to maintain these slaves and only the men whose business ventures were extensive enough could employ them. They were, however, a distinctly dependent class, of value only to the capitalist as a means to accumulate wealth. They were an injury to society as a whole, apart from the menace of their number, for they gradually forced into the same social status that self-supporting class,

whether plebs urbana or rustica, which could not withstand the crushing influence of the competition.

The rise in influence of the military class also opened a way to ill gotten and easily gotten gain, since the public land became diverted to the use of this class to the exclusion of those who had an interest in agriculture, and to the aggrandizement of the large landowners, into whose hands these small holdings soon reverted. This was perhaps only a negative influence, but it did add to the number of those for whom bread and games had to be provided, at the expense of some prosperous and sound element of society.

These are at least three classes that were developed out of the capitalistic system and were direct additions to the plebs urbana which became the disgrace of Rome. All of them, too, affected the other once important class, the small farmer, and swept him into the current of ruin. This farmer class was the last to give way to the utter unscrupulousness of capital. The economic advantage of husbandry depended largely on the price of grain. This, as we have seen, was alarmingly low through the fault of a government which showed an unpardonable disposition to favor the proletariat of the capital at the expense of the farmers of Italy. Thus a country wherein manufactures were inconsiderable and agriculture was the mainstay of the State was ruined and the welfare of a nation was sacrificed to the essentially unproductive elements in the city population. The revenues of the soil were gradually diverted from the working farmers into the hands of the fundholders, and, when insane legislation systematically depreciated the arable land of Italy by interfering with the price of grain, there began that second campaign of capital against free labor, or —what amounts to the same thing—against the small farm system. Against the large estate with its cheap slave labor the small landholder could not compete, when the value of his labor and the price of his product were both diminished. He no longer had any surplus worthy the name, and ran into debt. When the capitalist withheld his funds, no other course remained to the small landholder but to sell his holdings, which were added to the larger estates, managed by stewards and worked by slaves. The space which in the olden time of small holdings had supported 100 to 150 farmers' families was occupied by one family of free persons and about fifty slaves. If this was the remedy by which the decaying national economy was to be restored, it bore an aspect of extreme resemblance to the disease. Instead of regeneration it resulted in degeneration, and the community was fast resolving itself into a State composed of masters and slaves, of rich and poor. No door was open to the dispossessed farmer, but to join, as a last recruit, even if an unwilling one, that proletariat non-entity, the plebs urbana, and to raise with the other members of this class the cry for bread and games.

The hopeless ruin of so large a class in Rome as the old plebs rustica could not remain merely an economic fact. A change which directly destroyed the conserva-

tive element in the State, inevitably affected the popular mind. Even in the absence of any definite statement, we must infer that this transformation in social fact was followed by a change in social ideas. How could the farmer who fell a victim to the all-powerful plutocracy, homeless, houseless, and herdless, a social nonentity instead of a social potentiality, have preserved that same healthy sense of equality which was characteristic of the farmer whose civic existence rested on the foundations of fixed possessions and of assured profit for his toil? When cheapness of slave labor denied the most honorable laborer a modest livelihood, when the means by which many a free man was forced from house and home were often no better than robbery, why should not many a one have yielded to the temptation of answering the war of the great against the property of the small by a war of the small against the property of the great? 'War for the palace, peace for the hut' had been the watchword of the slaveking of Henna in Sicily, and it must have been the watchword of Spartacus and other slave leaders in Italy. Nothing could be nearer the thought of those who no longer had room in the free social system than to make common cause with slaves against a system that denied them rights. Indeed, so much were political parties lost to all healthy social and political feeling in the revolutionary times of the last century of the Republic that the slaves were frequently called out against their masters in aid of one political party or the other. When the bankrupt upper classes made common cause with this most fearful proletariat, why should the ruined farmer class hesitate to do the same? But, amid the general wreck, the farmer had the consciousness of being a sovereign Roman citizen with a vote, and the hope through this attribute to gain some share in the material prosperity was of significance, as it prevented the dismemberment of his class and brought him in crowds to Rome, where with thousands of his kind and with all grades of social degenerates he found sympathy and community of interest. Here in the plebs urbana all had the same interests, at least in their final degradation, though this body was made up of many classes which reached this social status in various ways.

The farmer class was the most influential body that reached this low level in the social structure and we have seen that this was due not to its own desires, but a result of inexorable economic law. Another class was composed of the wealthy aristocrats, who, in consequence of the tremendous political changes of fortune, or in consequence of the extraordinary rise in the standards of living, or because of extravagant misuse of wealth were now without the means of maintaining standing in their own class. Social outcasts, incapable of giving up their pretensions in life, these nobles were ruined materially and morally and became candidates for the plebs urbana and often its leaders in the fight against the social order.

Another addition was that class which might be termed the proletariat of culture so graphically de-

scribed by the Roman satirists, particularly Juvenal and Martial. The corner lawyers without the means to pay rent, the school teacher who lived in a small room built under the rafters, literary lights who performed the most menial service, even a Martial and a Juvenal who walked themselves footsore to the doors of the nobility, were genuine types of the *plebs urbana*, even if not entirely without means. Such as these, in particular, gave expression to the social discontent over the lack of proper relation between position in life and the pretensions of life.

Next follow those of slender means who were attracted by the glamor of the metropolis as moths to a flame, a type of whom Martial (4.5) addresses thus:

What do you seek in the city with your poverty and your uprightness? If you can not associate with carousers or informers, if you cannot seduce a neighbor's wife, if you cannot sell your services at some palace, where will you get money for clothes and rent?

So Juvenal (3.162 ff.) says:

For such as these it is not easy to keep their heads above water and their public virtues are sore tempted by slender means at home. For at Rome a wretched home and even frugal meals come high.

Nor could free labor, which may be expressed in terms of the artisan, the farm laborer, and the small shopkeeper, meet the demands of the rising standards of living which concentrated wealth controlled. Many fell into pauperism from an unwillingness to abase themselves to slaves, or from the lack of capital, which constituted the protection of a vocation rather than talent or physical endurance. Simply hopeless was the competition with the money power on the one hand and slave labor on the other, and, when the laborer in Rome earned but three sesterces a day, he was little more than a beggar, even if he had a vote.

When to all these were added the beggars and vagabonds, the starving unemployed and the idle rabble of all sorts, there was massed together a proletariat of dangerous proportions. And in Rome this body had constantly before its eyes the capitalists whose coarse materialism had no higher aim than the reckless accumulation of wealth, and whose plutocratic pride regarded idleness as gentlemanly and looked with sovereign disgust at poverty. Under these circumstances there soon came to the *plebs urbana* a consciousness of its distressful existence, a consciousness which was deepened by the absence of any effort to ameliorate conditions. The laws, the administration, and private liberality merely endeavored, through doles of bread and games, to blunt poverty's sense of its own misery and to keep the masses in that frame of mind which accepts social position as natural evolution. No doubt this purpose was attained with the majority of the idle rabble. But it made possible the stirring up of still greater discontent by unscrupulous demagogues. There was no more inspiring subject for agitation than the contradiction which could be pointed out in the life of the Roman proletariat between his position in the

social and economic world and the rights and titles that belonged to him as a Roman citizen. As a citizen whose vote in the *comitia* decided the fate of a world power he could count himself on a par with the wealthiest as the 'masters of the world (*terrarum dominos*)'. And yet this same sovereign citizen had in the many relations of civil life to undergo the bitter experience that in the city one 'is only what one has', or, as Petronius (137) phrases it, 'In the voyage of life a favorable breeze blows only for him who has the coin'.

The proletariat who has been described soon learned to philosophize on himself as a social phenomenon, and his sense of freedom as a Roman citizen came to rebel against the fearful pressure of economic inequality. Once the sting of the contradiction between wish and actuality was felt in his soul, he naturally came to ask, Why this poverty? By what means can it be thrown off? Is not the whole circumstance of our social impotence and the existing social order in which it is rooted an active injustice rather than a natural course of events? From daily ocular experience rather than from a theoretical analysis of economic laws, this aroused self consciousness of poverty naturally turned against wealth, whose representatives were responsible for the impoverishment of the masses and were interested in the continuance of this condition. The monopoly which once the right of birth provided wealth now possessed, and the political office that followed the man of wealth became, in its turn, a means for accumulating riches beyond the dreams of avarice. The new standards of rank and influence thus raised formed a plutocratic barrier equally as insuperable for the majority of citizens as the old one of birth had been. So that the tyrant Nabis could well say, in commenting on Rome to Flaminius⁴, *pauca excellere opibus, plebem subiectam esse illis vultis*, 'in your country wealth is to rule and all else to be subject to it'.

The consciousness of social position was not awakened in individuals only, to dissipate itself again, without influence, in the masses of the city. When we consider the extent of the *plebs urbana* and when we consider how the outdoor life of the ancients—the political assemblies, the social clubs, the public amusements, and the regular public distributions of grain, bread, etc.—kept all the elements of this class in constant contact with one another, it is clear that the members of the lower classes must soon have recognized a common cause for their discontent, a recognition which at once raised the consciousness of the individual to a general consciousness of the mass. As this new social class was a contrast to the historic social state, so the feeling naturally arose to array its special interests and special aims against the rest of society.

When the consciousness of its position was once developed and a community of interests established, it needed but little impulse from without to arouse in this dormant non-entity of society that revolutionary

³Horace, *Serm.* 1.1.62.

⁴Livy, 34.31.

potency so much feared by the ruling classes and so little dreamed of by its possessors. The nature of this outside influence was manifold. It may have been the pent up feeling of discontent and animosity bursting forth spontaneously and disclosing to the astonished oppressed the might of their own influence. It may have been, as is claimed by Poehlmann⁴, that the favorable conditions of existence under southern skies gave the Roman more time to reflect and enabled him to arrive by introspection at a consciousness of his influence. Was it not rather two other influences more concrete than those mentioned which made this consciousness of revolutionary power an active force—the practical politician and the party struggles of the last 150 years of the Republic? Certainly nowhere did revolutionary movements find more favorable soil than in the large assemblies of the masses, and the energy of one man could, and often did, attract thousands to his standards. Every political adventurer that understood the characteristics of the mob of Rome, its sources of discontent, and how to make use of them, soon had hundreds stretch forth their hands to be armed for purposes of plunder and murder. And, if the proposal was some anti-capitalistic measure, formal street fights were more often the result than not. The object lesson of the party struggles in which a part if not all of the plebs urbana was employed to further the interests of one party or the other was to unite this whole class in the employment of its strength for the promotion of its own interests. In this way this class more and more took protagonist rank upon the public stage as a political as well as an economic factor. It became a power of unrest and of destruction which lasted beyond the Republic and was a constant matter of concern even in the absolute governmental system of the Caesars. The masses had to be kept quiet, and their right to bread and games was openly acknowledged as a means to this end under the Empire. The grain distribution quieted the individual and the games the united body. And yet the excesses of violence grew, despite all efforts at counteraction. The prefect Symmachus had his house burned over his head by the raging mob for no other reason than that some evil-minded individual of the plebs urbana reported that Symmachus had expressed himself to the effect that he preferred to use his wine to slack lime rather than sell it at the current price. This circumstance proves not only the precariousness of the city charity system, but also the irritability of the mob and its willingness to turn loose the dogs of war, once it had come to a sense of its own irresistible power.

The history of the city exemplifies the social characteristics of the plebs urbana, which Sallust has described for us in speaking of the sympathies of the plebs for the Catiline conspiracy. He says⁵,

In every state those who have no means envy those who have. They hate the old existing order and long for a new régime to take its place. Because of a dis-

satisfaction with their own condition they constantly aim at a general revolution. Social disorder and revolution furnish them a livelihood without the accompanying cares, and they need fear no loss, as their poverty gives them nothing to lose.

Such is the picture of the plebs urbana, and the steps by which it reached this stage were practically these:

(1) the evolution in the State of *class differences* from economic conditions for which the money power was largely responsible, and which manifested itself first in the degradation of the plebs rustica.

(2) the growth of *class interests*, when the line between rich and poor became more clearly drawn and other social distinctions vanished.

(3) the development of *class opposition*, as the consciousness of its social status was awakened in the plebs urbana, which had absorbed the plebs rustica and made its interests the same.

(4) the outbreak of *class struggles*, as the consciousness of power arose in this lowest stratum of the body politic.

The economic condition Rome was facing was about the one we have tried to describe. The moral and social disintegration was the most deadly of the diseases that were threatening the commonwealth. Caesar understood much better than any other Roman of his time the character of the problem, and tried to solve it. He saw what heights the proletariat had attained and by what steps it had risen. He saw how the small farms had been swallowed up in the large estates of slave-owning capitalists, how the tasteless extravagance of the wealthy and the political aspirations of the nobles alike drew a sharp contrast between rich and poor, and how this latter class had within its grasp the destiny of Rome, whether it knew it or not. True, the moral and social decay was essentially incurable, and even Caesar could only deal with the worst symptoms of the deep-seated disease. However, his remedial legislation was of unimpeachable soundness. He directed his economic reforms against the root of the social discontent in a way that showed he had studied the problem of politics with a scientific spirit, and amid the chaos was laying the foundations of a new harmonious order. His assassination by the oligarchy, who did not see so far ahead as he, was meant to prevent the Empire. This we know it failed to do. It simply plunged the world into renewed strife, and left the work conceived by Caesar to be completed by smaller men in a less noble way. And, more powerful than all, baffling alike the strength of intellect and of physical force, grew the ever-swelling and finally all-engulfing current of the Plebs Urbana.

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REVIEW

An Introduction to the Study of Language. By Leonard Bloomfield. New York: Henry Holt and Company (1914). Pp. x + 335. \$1.75.

The first point to be noted with regard to this book is that there is no work in the English language with

⁴Geschichte des antiken Kommunismus.

⁵Bellum Catilinae 37.

which it should be compared. Naturally one thinks first of Oertel's Lectures on the Study of Language; but that is written for a different audience, and consequently on a different plan. For a parallel the author himself looks back to Whitney's Language and the Study of Language (1867); but the study of language, it is hardly necessary to say, has been revolutionized in the half century that intervenes. Midway, to be sure, lies Strong, Logeman and Wheeler, Introduction to the Study of the History of Language (1891), a book valuable in its day, but no longer adapted to modern needs. It deserves, however, to be mentioned here because of its relation to Paul's Prinzipien der Sprachgeschichte; which, though much closer, recalls that existing between Wundt's Völkerpsychologie, Volumes 1-2, Die Sprache, and the present work. The book thus aims at doing a service which is being done by no other work.

The importance of this service cannot be overestimated. The teaching of various languages bulks large in the education given to the youth of the country. An important part of our intellectual life consists of the study of the cultural tradition of various peoples, and in this philological work are involved many questions of a linguistic nature. Both teachers and philologists need a knowledge of the principles of linguistic science, for it would seem axiomatic that no one can reflect profitably upon the phenomena of any language, unless he first knows what language itself is.

Whitney found that pupils who had enjoyed "the ordinary training in the classical or the modern languages or in both" were still capable of forming "views respecting the nature of language and the relation of languages of a wholly crude and fantastic character". Professor Bloomfield writes somewhat differently:

While questions of a linguistic nature are everywhere a frequent subject of discussion, it is surprising how little even educated people are in touch with the scientific study of language.

It is in Germany a subject of reproach

dass der Philologe oft noch zu sehr an der altüberkommenen Betrachtungsweise hängt, die von einem mehr naiven als wissenschaftlichen Nachdenken über das Wesen der Sprache hervorgerufen wurde.

The quotation is from the Preface of Brugmann's Griechische Grammatik² (1889), which was considered worth reprinting in 1899 and 1913, in spite of a certain improvement recognized in his Kurze Vergleichende Grammatik (1904), pages V and 30. This improvement was not sufficient to keep Hirt, Handbuch der Griechischen Laut- und Formenlehre² (1912), 57, from writing in the same strain, "die einfachsten Tatsachen sind unbekannt"; nor Kretschmer from speaking, Einleitung in die Altertumswissenschaft, 1² (1912), 463, of "eine bedauerliche Entfremdung zwischen der Sprachwissenschaft und der klassischen Philologie".

Now I have no wish to enter upon the question whether there is a similar condition of affairs among our philologists; still less to seek to parallel Brugmann's

citation of Meisterhans and Blass with American names. But I do wish to suggest that there are symptoms which should lead us to reflect upon this question. Why should the author of a Greek Grammar in 1915 feel put upon the defensive for "making use of the principle of Analogy"? That is a straw, but it may serve to show the direction in which the wind is blowing. More serious symptoms are the lack of books already noted; the fact that persons who have been taught from one to five languages are (to put it mildly) "surprisingly out of touch with the scientific study of language"; and that our classical philology is very largely inspired by German philology, which is itself infected with this neglect of linguistics.

Our first need is to base our teaching of the classical languages squarely and fairly upon the principles of linguistic science. To form crude and fantastic ideas about the nature of language ought to be made impossible for any one who has studied Latin. That result cannot be attained without making it a great deal easier for the student to acquire that power of reading Latin which is the key to the enjoyment of its literature and the appreciation of the relation between ancient and modern civilisation. Prerequisite to this is a truer understanding of the nature of language on the part of our philologists and of our teachers themselves¹.

Under these circumstances it seems to the reviewer that one question alone is of prime importance: Can the work under review render the service it has undertaken to render? This question may be answered without hesitation in the affirmative. Among students of linguistics, there is a general consensus of opinion about the fundamental principles on which their work is based, and such agreement extends frequently even to matters of detail. Professor Bloomfield's book is limited avowedly to the presentation of this 'accepted doctrine', and the non-linguist may use it without fear of being misled upon such questions. To set forth this

¹The necessity of a knowledge of the principles of linguistic science is not to be confused with the desirability of a study of comparative grammar. I should strongly advise any student who desires to fit himself to be a teacher of Latin or of Greek to include comparative grammar, in his preparation. I should not advise any one to 'adapt' Hirt's Handbuch for a text-book in our Schools. It seems worth while to say this because we have recently (American Journal of Philology 26.242 f.) been told that Hirt "modestly suggests that the gymnasia would do better by Greek, if they ceased to afflict students with a modicum of Xenophon and Homer and taught instead his handbook". This is a misrepresentation of Hirt's views upon a very important question. The problem confronting him at Leipzig may be restated in terms of American life: What shall we do with *graduate students* desirous of becoming teachers of Latin who come to the University ignorant of Greek? That problem is already not unheard of in America and there is danger that it may become acute. At present we seem to have three possibilities: (1) to treat the aspirations of such students as we do undesired kittens; (2) to allow these students to persist in their ignorance, and turn them out with Masters' degrees upon an unsuspecting public; (3) to put into their hands a *Beginners' Book*, written for School children, that they may get a modicum of Xenophon and Homer. Hirt believes that *for such students* a survey of the laws of the structure of the Greek language is better than this modicum of text, claims to have had the best results in so teaching them, and has made his Handbuch suited to their needs. In this he may be right or wrong—that is another question—but the problem is apt to become pressing, and we really should be able to devise some solution better than any of the three mentioned above.

doctrine with sufficient wealth of illustration, in a form that is small in compass and yet such as may be read with ease and pleasure, was no light task; and the skill with which it has been accomplished is deserving of high praise.

On the other hand, the very nature of this task renders it inevitable that another should find points at which he might wish for a different treatment. The broadest criticism I should offer is the wish that more space had been given to the processes of linguistic change. Room for this in part might have been gained by the exclusion of the phonetics of the second chapter, the subject being one that is usually handled separately. I must add, however, that the section is in itself most admirable, and that I should be loath to lose it.

One idea that runs through the book is open to such serious objection as to require separate notice. At times reflective examination of a language may show that certain differences of sounds are distributed according to conditions which may readily be observed and stated. Our English vowels, for instance, are longer in final position and before voiced sounds than before unvoiced, longer in *bid* than in *bit*, in *bee*, *bead* than in *beat*. In such cases Professor Bloomfield speaks of "automatic sound-variation". Now this term suggests very strongly an idea, which Professor Bloomfield would no doubt disclaim, that such changes have no sufficient causes but just happen of themselves—automatically. But even worse than this is another suggestion, that each speaker continually makes these variations (according to the conditions involved) in each production of the sound; that we, for instance, start always with the short vowels and automatically leave them unchanged when we say *bit*, *beat*, but automatically lengthen them when we say *bid*, *bee*, or *bead*. Such a position hardly requires refutation. A phonetic change is a historical event or a series of such events occupying a definite portion of time; the final result is then transmitted by tradition, and it is a mistake to suppose that the process is being continually repeated. Such changes are due to complexes of causes that in their totality are unknown. Sometimes one (or more) of the elements of the complex can be ascertained; we then speak of 'conditioned' phonetic changes. Now, after the change is an accomplished fact, it is obviously a matter of indifference whether such 'conditions' are perpetual or not. The new sound goes on its own path, and what happens to it is another chapter in its history. It is surprising to find that Professor Bloomfield (221) maintains on the contrary that the process is being repeated automatically as long as these 'conditions' are undisturbed.

The pre-Germanic spirant-voicing after unaccented vowel, for instance, left such automatic variations as **wāsa* 'I was': **wēzumūn* 'we were' . . . ; when, however, the stress was later shifted everywhere to the first syllable, the variation was of course no longer automatic, but purely traditional, as still in the modern forms, *was*: *were*. So, by a pre-English vowel assimilation . . . **fōliz*, the nominative plural

of **fōt* 'foot', became **fētiz*, a variation whose automatism was destroyed by the phonetic change which dropped the second syllable of **fētiz*, giving Old English *fēt*

The examples really prove the contrary. Old English *fēt* shows that at the time of the loss of the final syllable **fētiz* was already established as the traditional pronunciation. Had the form still been **fōtiz* varying automatically to **fētiz* because of the following vowel, a form **fōl* should have resulted when that vowel was suppressed.

The whole concept of sound-automatism appears to me, I confess, as the introduction of some mystic power for which there is no place in our explanation of language. Here also it is entirely needless.

My opinion about the division of syllables and words differs also from that of Professor Bloomfield to some extent, as may be seen by a comparison of the American Journal of Philology, 33.403 f., 34. 157 f. On page 152 examples of Umlaut and Ablaut are given where we have been led to expect definitions. On page 154 it would be well to explain that in distinguishing between sound-variation and affixation there are two points of view, one historical, the other descriptive. From the former, the difference in vowel quantity between *amās*, *amat* (from **amāt*) is sound-variation; from the latter, we may either view it in this fashion, or analyse *am-ās*, *am-at*. The historical point of view is not always possible, but the descriptive must not be confused with it. The same applies to affixation and infixation (155) and the Indo-European nasal present would illustrate the impossibility of coming to a decision on historical grounds. On pages 204 f. the discussion of 'phonetic law' might be improved, in what direction can be seen from Wundt's article in *Philologische Studien* 3.196 ff.

Separate mention must be made of the last two chapters. Of these the first, *The Teaching of Language*, is written from the standpoint of modern languages; only *mutatis mutandis* can it be applied to the teaching of the Classics, but anyone who is teaching the latter can surely gain from reading and reflecting upon it. The second, *The Study of Language*, contains very sound and sane advice for the student who is planning to devote himself to the study of language. To the books mentioned in it I should like to add Otto Jespersen, *Phonetische Grundfragen* (Leipzig, 1904), and A. Modern English Grammar on Historical Principles (Heidelberg, 1909-1914); P. Kretschmer, *Sprache*, in *Einleitung in die Altertumswissenschaft* herausgegeben von A. Gercke und E. Norden², 463-564 (Leipzig, 1912: especially valuable for the classicist); and L. Sütterlin, *Das Wesen der Sprachlichen Gebilde. Kritische Bemerkungen zu Wilhelm Wundts Sprachpsychologie* (Heidelberg, 1902).

Professor Bloomfield has put a valuable tool within the reach of teachers of language and philologists. It is to be hoped that the classicists will be among the first to make use of it.

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